

boats. They have the *wan-jai*, or native straw sandals, but these are soon cast to pieces; one day's good marching will knock them to pieces. Again, these same *wan-jai* do not last long, and the men have to be constantly stopping to replace them. I have attended many of their field-days and sham-fights, and my opinion is that the troops will never stand severe knocking about, but will soon fall to pieces, especially the officers.

THE CHINESE FLEET.

The following article, especially interesting at the present time, originally appeared in the *Chinese Times* six years ago, and bears the signature of Mr. Michie:—

The Victory Li with a large retinue of Chinese officials and a few selected foreign guests from whose ranks all possible critics were excluded, left a week ago for a fortnight's cruise with the Peking Fleet which has lately been reinforced by two cruisers built in Britain and two built in Newcastle, and is now, as far as regards the number and quality of the vessels and the power of the armaments, a fairly efficient if unequal and incomplete squadron.

To form a true idea of the Chinese Northern Fleet, the only right standard of comparison is to include in the considerations an examination of the navy of the neighbouring country of Japan.

The Japanese navy is, in actual force of ships and guns, much inferior to that of China. But, in effect, the balance might be redressed in warfare, as China does not possess the necessary elements of power which Japan has in abundance. Japan has at least four large dry docks, also some smaller slips. She has an admirable arsenal at Yokohama, is founding another in the Inland Sea, and has the right to use the well-appointed workshops of Kobe, Yokohama, and Nagasaki, which would be of the utmost value in time of war. Japan has also an adequate naval administration; in fact, no European navy is managed by more intelligent and practical methods than the Japanese Naval Department of Tokyo.

There are in Japan an ample number of Admirals and Commodores, all competent to direct their forces in offensive or defensive war, men who understand the right tactical uses of gun, ram, or torpedo, and are able to form and direct naval brigades to co-operate on land service for attack or defence of positions, battery service, etc. The Japanese navy captains, lieutenants, engineers, gunners, and other personnel, are also thoroughly well trained and competent, and need not fear the ordeal of comparison with the similar officers of the European marine services. In fact, the Japanese officers, in marked contradiction to the Chinese naval authorities, eagerly invite the observation and criticism of foreign experts from which the Chinese shrink. In consequence, the Japanese navy, which virtually dates from 1867 or 1868, when judged by the highest standards, must rank as a most creditable and efficient service as far as direction and officers are concerned. The crews are also of excellent quality. The trained seamen and gunners are admirably well drilled and equipped, there are full reserves, a regular method of recruitment; and, in fact, the Japanese navy is an admirable service, capable of ready expansion and will be able to protect the interests of the Japanese Empire whenever the inevitable struggle for predominance on the Asian shore of the Pacific occurs.

The Chinese naval progress is more slow and less sure; and although some progress is made no satisfactory results can be obtained until all the sea forces of the Empire are placed under one suitable and supreme direction with the requisite concomitants of a modern and scientific organization.

The Victory Li may, however, regard his fleet with pride, as himself, under the pressure of continual difficulties, has formed it as it is, in about twelve years' time, and notwithstanding the shortcomings, which he will point out in a frank and friendly spirit, he has the right to say that he alone of all Chinese statesmen has been able to create a powerful navy, as well as the best army of China.

The Chinese Northern Fleet includes two large armoured ships, the *Ting-yuen* and *Chen-yuen*, each of 7,430 tons displacement, with two screws, and engines of 6,200 horse-power, etc. The armour is partial and vertical, and is fourteen inches thick. It is of ample length for protecting the engines, boilers, and magazines. Each vessel carries two partially armoured *schoners*, four breech-loading Krupp guns of 30-half c.m. = 12.01 English inches, for shell of 72 lbs. weight, which, with 20 lbs. powder charge, have an initial velocity of 1,713 feet, and are therefore considerably inferior to the cannon of more recent construction.

There is an unrigged cruiser, the *Chiyun*, built in 1883 at Stettin, partially armoured. She carries two 21 c.m. Krupp guns = 8.26 English, for shell of 108 lbs., which, with a powder charge of 20 lbs., attain an initial velocity of 1,657 feet. She has, also, a powerful torpedo armament of four tubes.

There are the two new cruisers with vertical armour, built at Stettin, and two new Armstrong cruisers with horizontal armour, lately described in our paper with much detail. There are also two older Armstrong cruisers, the first of the special type, each carrying two 25-ton Armstrong guns of high power. These last two vessels, as the prototypes of the later and perfected Armstrong cruisers such as the *Giovanni*, *Banzen*, *Emeralda*, *Dagbl*, *Naruto*, etc., are still conditions. They are also interesting as showing the development of an idea conceived by an engineer who endeavoured to combine great offensive power of armament with high speed and small size. The first stage was the little gun-vessel, H.B.M.S. *Staunch*, which on a hull not larger than that of a Peiho tug-boat carried a 6-inch 12-ton gun. The next stage was shown in the sea-going craft known as the albatross-like gunboats built for China, some of which carried cannon of 35 to 38 tons. The third stage was shown in the two cruisers built in 1881-1882 for the Victory Li, followed as they were in 1884 by the *Emeralda* and her consort, which marked a distinct departure in the art of naval warfare, the latest outcome of which is the Spanish cruiser, *Risso*, carrying an immensely powerful battery, a large torpedo armament, a very large coal supply, an unusually thick oblique and horizontal deck armour, and engine power that gives 20.8 knots or 24 land miles speed per hour. Two months ago the same fundamental idea was extended by the British Admiralty in the design of the *Blacks* and *Blanchet*, with a potential speed of 23 knots or 25 land miles per hour.

The Chinese Northern Fleet, notwithstanding its mixed armament, including as it does many old muzzle-loading guns of limited range and power, all good in their day but no longer fitted for the exigencies of war, is now a tolerably effective weapon as a whole for offence or defence, as far as material is concerned, but should be regarded as a nucleus.

There are many defects in the present composition of the fleet. There are no rigidly armoured vessels of the *Blackburn* type, the most perfect sea-going ironclad yet designed, and as such adopted by the naval advisory board of the United States after long and searching investigation. There are no rigid cruisers of H.B.M.S. *Leander*, of the French *Primauguet*, or German *Albatross* type, all well equipped, and, for a heavy,

indispensable vessels. There are no swift gunboats, well-armed, rightly but yet inadequately "rigged," capable of steering over 14 knots, and carrying much coal. There are too few torpedo boats. Japan is now building at Kobe from 25 to 30 new torpedo craft of two classes, the largest of which will be fit to accompany a fleet at sea.

The Chinese navy ships, although the dry dock at Port Arthur will not be complete for some time yet, and then will consist of one dock only, have one and all unhealthful from bottom to top. To keep such vessels efficient for service docking should be done three times yearly, a need which constitutes a grave defect if all circumstances are considered. Nor can the personnel of the fleet be considered satisfactory, though no doubt a gradual and visible improvement goes on. The Chief Admiral, Ting, an intelligent and meritorious official, reasonable in his views and a fair administrator, has never mastered even the rudiments of naval science, and in time of war it would be necessary to replace him and all officials of his class by men who can conduct the tactical evolutions of a fleet during the continual variations of the different phases of active operations.

Before the Chinese navy or the Chinese army can fulfil any of the conditions that must be observed in actual warfare, there must be a reform of the present methods. To create a fleet of the present methods, able to defend the ports and coast, and, if needed, to meet attack by counter-attack or suitable defence, there must be a settled and definite system of organization which must include supreme and subordinate director, docks, arsenals, forts, stores, war-ships, naval schools, coal supply, scientific and constructive services, a medical and hospital department, training ships, regular systems of law, discipline, equipment, and all the proper and necessary concomitants of a naval force, so that all the fleets of China should be able to combine, or take separate or concerted action promptly and with efficiency.

Great efforts are being made to complete and equip the works at Port Arthur, and it is said that the principal reason of the Victory recent Li's cruise was to decide upon the creation of war ports at Tientsin and Weihai-wei, as these two last named harbours may upon investigation prove to be in many essential respects superior by natural endowment to Port Arthur. On the Yangtze, when a naval system is formulated, it will not be difficult to found a naval arsenal near Chingkiang. There are also good stations for the mid-China fleet near to Chusan and at Nam-quan, while the Canton fleet has abundance of good sites suitable for war ports, especially of the second and third class. At the same time there are the beginnings of a competent naval service in the pupils trained in the Foochow, Shanghai, and Tientsin schools, provided all three schools were managed on one uniform system, and the general training less neutralized than is at present the case by the predominance of theoretical over practical education, the avoidance of physical discipline, and the want of training. Without training-ships the Chinese naval cadets can never become good officers.

When skilled officers can be provided in ample numbers for the Chinese fleet, unless the service is to be a sham, a thorough educational course should be enforced, as in Japan. The vessels of the squadrons should be exercised at sea at varying speeds, to accustom officers and men to accurate observation and due performance of tactical movements. Not infrequently there should be evolutionary exercise at night. The crews should be regularly trained to boat service, gunnery, small arms drill, coaling the vessels, etc., and to perfect the officers and men in their duties, the crews when in port should be trained to embarkation and disembarkation in boats, to land field-pieces and machine guns, to brigade for shore duty, throw up earth works, and bag walls, be fitted for land service with soldiers, and learn how to attack or defend positions, batteries, etc.

But until China has her navy under one direction, and possesses adequate systematic and scientific direction her fleet, which cost so much, and from which so much is expected, will prove to be of but small, if any, value in time of war with a naval power.

KOREAN TRADE.

At the present crisis a useful purpose may perhaps be served by a brief reference to the trade of the country which the Japanese and Chinese have very considerably developed since the late war. The Japanese have not only better than reproduce a number of quotations from the consular report on the trade of Korea which was issued from the British Foreign Office about a month ago, for it furnishes a good deal of useful information, while its dry statistics are, strange to say, varied by flashes of picturesque humour. Korean foreign trade has been on the down grade for several years. Its estimated value was £1,702,200 in 1891, £1,450,410 in 1892, and only £972,507 in 1893. Making all allowance for the effect of exchange, this, Consul Wilkinson thinks, is a "deplorable falling off." The drop in 1893 is accounted for partly by the continued congestion of markets after the "boom" of 1892-3, partly by storms that in September damaged the rice crops, and partly by restrictions placed by the Korean Government on rice exports. The Japanese believe, or at least profess to believe, that this and more ingenious measures of obstruction are part of a scheme, instigated by Chinese influences at Seoul, to boycott their trade and oust or ruin their subjects. In March last year there was a mysterious and quasi-religious movement in the South of Korea naming itself Eastern Culture, and directed by persons who were represented to be "reactionary" in their protest and bloodthirsty in their intentions. From a different point of view it is described as "a conventional organisation for resisting too rapacious extortion." Its net effort was to take trade out of Japanese hands, raise the price of rice, and give the Seoul authorities an excuse for forbidding its export. A claim of damages on account of the illegal manner in which this decree was enforced was settled by a cash payment of thirty thousand dollars, and a promise to pay thirty-seven thousand more. But the September storm gave the Korean Government fresh occasion—or fresh excuse—for shutting off the rice supply to Japan. Rapacious officials took it upon them to hamper the export of articles "which only to a very vivid imagination could appear as foodstuffs, such as snails and cowhides." Indeed, when one learns the barriers that are put in the way, the wonder will seem not that Korea's foreign trade is declining, but that it has any trade whatever. One branch of trade that kept up was the export of fish, especially sardines, which "instead of being prepared as a breakfast relish, are disposed of to the Japanese in the less delicate form of manure." Koreans are too lazy and stupid to make either good fishermen or tolerable fish-curers. Last, too, much pity should be bestowed on the exiles in Korea, however, we are informed that "a large salmon is sold at Wonsan for 3d." and that "oysters of excellent quality form a staple article of food in winter." The hide trade is regulated by the cattle plague; the more respectable the more skilful, the Korean is said of beef, but a certain Confucian precept forbidding the slaughter of the ploughing ox gives an excellent reason for an excellent

squeeze," and "a village community, except during times of murrain, can only taste beef by special permit of the authorities." Happily for Korean epicures and for the hide trade, murrain is seldom absent. Perfunctory, Mr. Wilkinson thinks, is perhaps too euphemistic a phrase by which to describe the curing process. "The popular method," a Chemist (the chief port) to spread the skin, still unpleasantly gory, on the high road, and trust to the dogs, the sun, and the feet of the passers by to do the drying. An undeveloped branch of trade is that of human hair, which, owing to "the extent of the rice fields keeping the atmosphere moist and clear from dust," grows luxuriantly, and is "comparatively free from foreign matter." There is a demand for it to supply the Palace attendants, fashion requiring these to wear on their heads huge wigs of false hair. "The only feature to which the fastidious *jeogang* takes exception is its colour, which is too fair for its taste; but this is overcome by the accommodating perukeer, who dyes it a fashionable shade of black." With the coming in of the electric light, Palace fashions in headgear may change. Mr. Wilkinson believes also that great things might come of the introduction of mangles. The male Koreans love to go abroad in glossy white outer garments, and half the days and good part of the nights of their wives and daughters are spent in taking these to pieces, scrubbing and pounding them, and loosely stitching or "padding" them together with starch. More "presentable forms of exported peltry" than cow hides are the skins of the bear, leopard, and tiger, chiefly from the wild and beautiful region in the north of Korea. After exportation to the Japanese, wild animals and the grandeur of the scenery of his district, Mr. Olsson, the Commissioner at Wonsan (Chinese, Yensan, and Japanese, Gensan) breaks out:—"Surely it is a reproach alike to the ambitious globe-trotter yearning for unbeaten tracks, to the ardent sportsman in search of big game, and to the sedate aspirant to the honours of the Geographical Society, that within such easy reach there should still be a *terra incognita* to passing so high a reputation." But this region contains more than rugged mountains and tiger furs. The contract price of 60,000 dollars for the recent installation, by a Yankee engineer, of the electric light into the Seoul Palace was paid in gold dust and nuggets, and it is said that "two of the largest of the nuggets showed so little sign of attrition as to make it evident that the place of their discovery could not have been far from the matrix. They had formed, however, part of the considerable sum remitted every year from the mines in the districts above Wonsan to the capital as royalties, or taxes." Wonsan and its tigers and nuggets are next door neighbours to Eastern Siberia.

About 65 per cent. of the whole trade of Korea is, and for upwards of 200 years has been, British, the majority of the Japanese and Chinese pioneers of trade in the peninsula being nothing more than middle-men between the British wholesale traders in Japan and China and the merchants. The total value of native and foreign import and export trade of Korea averages about \$8,000,000 of which \$3,000,000 represent the value of the exports, including about half a million dollars worth of raw gold. Given a more civilised form of Government, immunity from spasmodic rebellions, the opening of more ports and the reduction of taxation to a minimum the trade of Korea would, there is good reason to believe, soon assume proportions which would make it one of the most powerful branches of the subject's moment's consideration, in their most sanguine moments, ever thought possible.

THE TAI-WON-KUN.

The new Regent of Korea is one of the few Eastern statesmen outside Japan who are as well-known among the Japanese as any of their own statesmen. For the past few years not a single Japanese of any pretension to public consideration has gone to Korea without a visit to the Tai-Won-kun. No correspondence from Seoul has been thought complete without some reference to the father of the Korean King. But just at present he is a particularly prominent figure in the columns of the vernacular press, and portraits and biographical sketches of him occupy prominent places in the papers. From these sketches we shall reproduce a few salient facts in the life-history of the distinguished Korean. He was born in January, 1821, in one of the most powerful branches of the Royal family. At the demise of the last King, the Queen-dowager, who appears to have been a woman of character and ability, took the responsibility upon herself of calling to the throne the second son of the Tai-Won-kun, or, as he was called, the Li-wei-wu (Japanese pronunciation). The title Tai-Won-kun, it must be remembered, was assumed by him only after the coronation of his son as King; it being an honourary designation of the father of the King of Korea. His son being then very young, the Tai-Won-kun directed the affairs of State as Regent of the realm. His Regency extended over a period of about twelve years (1865-1876). His administration was stained by a cruel persecution of the Christians, thousands of whom suffered horrible deaths, and by the blood of nearly ten thousand unfortunate people who were butchered simply for the purpose of countering a prophecy that the Tai-Won-kun was doomed to be vanquished by ten thousand enemies. But in spite of these great blemishes, the Tai-Won-kun's Government was on the whole beneficial to the country. Perhaps the most conspicuous feature of his administration was the steadiness and energy with which the independence of the kingdom was asserted. His administration was also distinguished on the whole by the absence of corruption and other vices, which have been the curses of the Ming Government. Especially in the appointment of officials, the Tai-Won-kun showed a remarkable disinterestedness, for he paid no attention to the birth and family connections of candidates for official posts. In 1876 he resigned the Regency and lived a private life for six years, when in 1881 he again became the head of the government. But the Ming faction being now overwhelmingly powerful, his tenure of office was not long. He was deposed under false pretences to China, where he was kept a close prisoner for a few years. Since his return to Seoul he has led a strictly secluded life, and seemed to have abandoned all idea of taking part in political affairs. It was during this period of inactivity that he showed a passionate delight in collecting rare and valuable Japanese vases. This circumstance made him the object of intense suspicion and hatred of the Ming politicians, who did not allow him even to see the King. But now the tables have been turned and he is once more at the head of the State, the last hope of all the friends of Korean independence and progress.—*Japan Mail*.

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[822]

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A REGULAR MEETING of the above LODGE will be held in the FARMER'S HALL, Zealand Street, THIS EVENING, the 16th instant, at 8.30 for 9 o'clock precisely. Visiting Brethren are cordially invited.
Hongkong, 16th August, 1894. [861]

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For Freight or Passage, apply to
DODWELL, CARLILL & Co.,
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Hongkong, 16th August, 1894. [993]

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Hongkong, 16th October, 1891.

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Hongkong, 9th August, 1894. [761]

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